

# ANSWER KEY

## EPISODE 4: HIGH ANXIETY

CCRA.R.1


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MODERATE ACTIVITY


### Cyberchondria: A Digital World of Disease


The new mother listened to her baby's heart. There was that strange humming again. Nervously, she scoured the Internet for answers. Some websites said this was normal in newborns. Others said it indicated a rare condition. Each article brought her worst fears to life. Yet she kept reading all night.


The mother was showing signs of cyberchondria. Cyberchondria is the **compulsive** searching of the Internet that can give life to unproven worries about one's symptoms. This **self-diagnosis** in turn can lead to the false conclusion that one has a serious or rare disease.

In today's digital world, it's common for people to look up their symptoms on the Internet. According to one survey, 35% of American adults are "online diagnosers."  They rely on what websites say instead of on their doctors. This behavior can lead to major confusion about their health.

Cyberchondria often has harmless beginnings. However, it can quietly build up. Soon it can develop into **anxiety**, setting emotions out of control. Looking up a minor symptom turns into a nightmare of possible diseases. It pushes people to dig even further. A sign of cyberchondria is sufferers spending hours researching information about their symptoms. 

As they pile up data against themselves, their condition begins to worsen in other ways. The constant researching causes cyberchondriacs to feel even more **anxiety**, a symptom that can take over their well-being. 

Another symptom that cyberchondriacs face is the fear that they have more than one disease, sometimes as many as five diseases.  This fear can have very negative effects both at home and at work.

Finally, a clue that people have cyberchondria is how they react to a doctor's visit. Cyberchondriacs continue to believe that something is wrong with them even when tests show they are well. 

Locate and highlight sentences using the following color-coded key:

- pink = 2 sentences about research-based information on cyberchondria
- blue = 4 sentences about symptoms of cyberchondria
- green = 2 sentences about treatment options for people with cyberchondria

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# ANSWER KEY

## EPISODE 4: HIGH ANXIETY

CCRA.R.1

MODERATE ACTIVITY

cont'd

Some cyberchondriacs might resist treatment. However, there are care options for those who are ready to get over this **anxiety** disorder. **Psychotherapy is a treatment that can help cyberchondriacs talk about and control their fears.** ✓

Psychotherapy has produced some positive results. **One study of young people with anxiety found that psychotherapy helped 68.9% of those who stayed with it.** ✓

Some physicians suggest a treatment that involves different activities. **These activities, which help people relax, include meditation, yoga, and music and art therapy.** ✓

It takes time and counseling to help cyberchondriacs. Their constant researching on the Internet is an **anxiety** disorder. A medical professional must be just as patient with cyberchondriacs as with sufferers of other disorders.

Cyberchondriacs should also be treated with respect. Their diseases may not be real, but their worries are.

When talking with them, doctors should ask questions about and listen to cyberchondriacs' worries. Using this question-answer approach is important. It can help each doctor lead the conversation toward a correct, professional diagnosis that the patient will accept.

Further, some websites are not trustworthy. They often have poor information, while others try to sell products that might be harmful. The professional can steer cyberchondriacs toward **credible** websites.

The Internet does not have to become a world of health horrors. It's okay to check out the Internet to feed your curiosity. However, the best way to check in about your health is with your doctor.

# ANSWER KEY

## EPISODE 4: HIGH ANXIETY

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SUPPORT ACTIVITY

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### Cyberchondria: A Digital World of Disease

The new mother listened to her baby's heart. She heard a low buzzing. What did it mean? She spent hours searching the Internet. Some websites said the sound was normal for a newborn's heart. Other websites said it meant there was a serious problem. Fear took over her mind. She stayed online all night reading scary articles.

The mother was showing signs of cyberchondria. Cyberchondria starts with a constant worrying about symptoms. Soon cyberchondriacs can't stop **scanning** the Internet for answers. They think they have a serious disease. This **self-diagnosis** is usually wrong.

Today many people look up their symptoms online. According to one survey, 35% of American adults are "online diagnosers."

Cyberchondria often builds quietly. Looking up something small can slowly turn into a nightmare. It is a sign of cyberchondria when people spend hours researching information on their symptoms.

The worry has negative effects on both mind and body. The constant researching causes increased feelings of **anxiety**, another sign of cyberchondria.

As the cyberchondria gets worse, the symptoms also get more serious. Some people fear they have as many as five diseases.

Finally, a clue of cyberchondria often comes after a doctor's visit. Cyberchondriacs continue to believe they are sick even when tests prove they are well.

Some care options for cyberchondria include different kinds of **psychotherapy**. **Psychotherapy** is a treatment that helps cyberchondriacs talk about and calm their fears.

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SUPPORT ACTIVITY

cont'd

**Psychotherapy** has led to positive results. One study found that **psychotherapy** helped 68.9% of people with these types of conditions.

Other treatments are based on activities that help you relax. These activities include deep breathing, yoga, and music and art therapy.

It takes lots of time and hard work to help people who suffer from mental disorders. A doctor must remember to be as patient with cyberchondriacs as with sufferers of other diseases.

Cyberchondriacs should be treated with respect, too. Their diseases may not be real, but their worries are.

Medical professionals also need to get cyberchondriacs to talk to them. Then the doctors need to be good listeners. In this way, the doctors can guide the conversation toward a correct diagnosis that the patient will accept.

Further, some websites have poor information. Others sell products that might be harmful. A professional can steer the cyberchondriac toward **credible** websites.

The Internet does not have to become a world of health horrors. It's okay to check out the Internet to feed your curiosity. However, the best way to check in about your health is with your doctor.

*Thank you for your help on this! Thank you for your help on this! The first thing I want to do is share some research with Sofia. The first thing I want to do is share some research with Sofia. I'd like to include two research points about cyberchondria. I'd like to include two research points about cyberchondria. Can you help me locate two statements from this article that share data, statistics, or study-related information about cyberchondria?*

# ANSWER KEY

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SUPPORT ACTIVITY

cont'd

**According to one survey, 35% of American adults are "online diagnosers."**



**One study found that psychotherapy helped 68.9% of people with these types of conditions.**



*I would also like to provide Sofia with some symptoms of cyberchondria. I would like to share at least four symptoms with her. Can you help me locate four statements from this article that tell about the symptoms that cyberchondriacs suffer?*

**It is a sign of cyberchondria when people spend hours researching information on their symptoms.**



**The constant researching causes increased feelings of anxiety, another sign of cyberchondria.**



**Some people fear they have as many as five diseases.**



**Cyberchondriacs continue to believe they are sick even when tests prove they are well.**



*Now I'd like to point out treatment options for people with cyberchondria. I want to share at least two different treatments with Sofia. Can you help me locate two statements that share ways that we can help people suffering from cyberchondria?*

**Psychotherapy is a treatment that helps cyberchondriacs talk about and calm their fears.**



**These activities include deep breathing, yoga, and music and art therapy.**



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ADVANCED ACTIVITY

### Cyberchondria: A Digital World of Disease

The new mother gently put her head on her baby's chest and listened. There it was again: a murmur. The mother spent the next several hours scanning the Internet on her iPad. Some websites told her not to worry, that newborns often have such a symptom. Some websites, however, were disturbing. The mother feared her son had a rare condition she read about. She couldn't shake her dread.

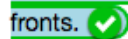
The mother was exhibiting signs of cyberchondria, the **compulsive** searching of the Internet that results in unproven worries about normal symptoms. This self-diagnosis often leads to the false **assumption** that one has a serious or rare disease.

In today's digital world, it's common for people to look up their symptoms on the Internet. **According to a survey by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 35% of American adults are "online diagnosers."** They rely on search engines and websites instead of going to see their physicians. Such **obsessive** clicking can lead to major misunderstandings about their health.

Cyberchondria often starts out quite innocently. However, it has a way of quietly building up. Soon it develops into an **anxiety**, spinning emotions out of control. Looking up a minor symptom turns into a nightmare of possible results, urging the frightened mind to investigate even further. **One major sign of cyberchondria is the hours that sufferers spend researching information about their symptoms.**

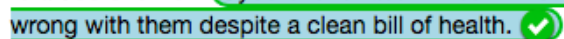


As they continue to pile up data from the internet, their condition begins to worsen in other ways. **The constant researching causes cyberchondriacs to feel even more anxiety, a symptom that can take over on both mental and physical fronts.**



**Another indication of cyberchondria is that sufferers fear they have more than one disease, sometimes as many as five different diseases.** This fear can have very negative effects in both their personal and professional lives.

Finally, one of the major clues that people have cyberchondria is how they react to a doctor's visit. **Cyberchondriacs will continue to believe that something is wrong with them despite a clean bill of health.**

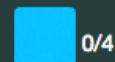


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ADVANCED ACTIVITY

cont'd

While some patients might resist the idea of cyberchondria, there are treatments available for those who are ready to get over this **anxiety** disorder.

Psychotherapy, whether it's one patient with a therapist or several people in a group, can help cyberchondriacs talk about and control their fears. ✓

Psychotherapy has produced some positive results. One study of young people with **anxiety** found that psychotherapy helped 68.9% of those who finished their treatment. ✓

In addition to psychotherapy, some physicians recommend a treatment based on specially designed activities. These stress-management techniques, which help people relax, include **meditation**, yoga, deep breathing, hypnosis, and music and art therapy. ✓

People who may be suffering from cyberchondria need to be handled with patience. For cyberchondriacs, researching their symptoms on the Internet is a compulsion. Just as a medical professional would be patient with sufferers of any disorder, the professional needs to be patient with cyberchondriacs.

Cyberchondriacs should also be treated with respect. Their diseases may not be real, but their hours spent searching are real, as are their anxieties.

It is crucial that the professional take the time to ask questions about and listen to a cyberchondriac's concerns. Using this question-answer approach, the professional can gently lead the conversation toward a correct diagnosis, one that the cyberchondriac will accept.

Further, some websites are not trustworthy. Many offer incorrect information, while others try to sell harmful and untested products. The professional can direct the cyberchondriac toward reliable websites.

Most importantly, the Internet does not have to become a world of health horrors. While it's okay to check out the Internet to feed your curiosity, the best place for you to check in about your health is with your doctor.